



TALES OF FANTASY AND SUSPENSE!

No.4

10c

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ERIE

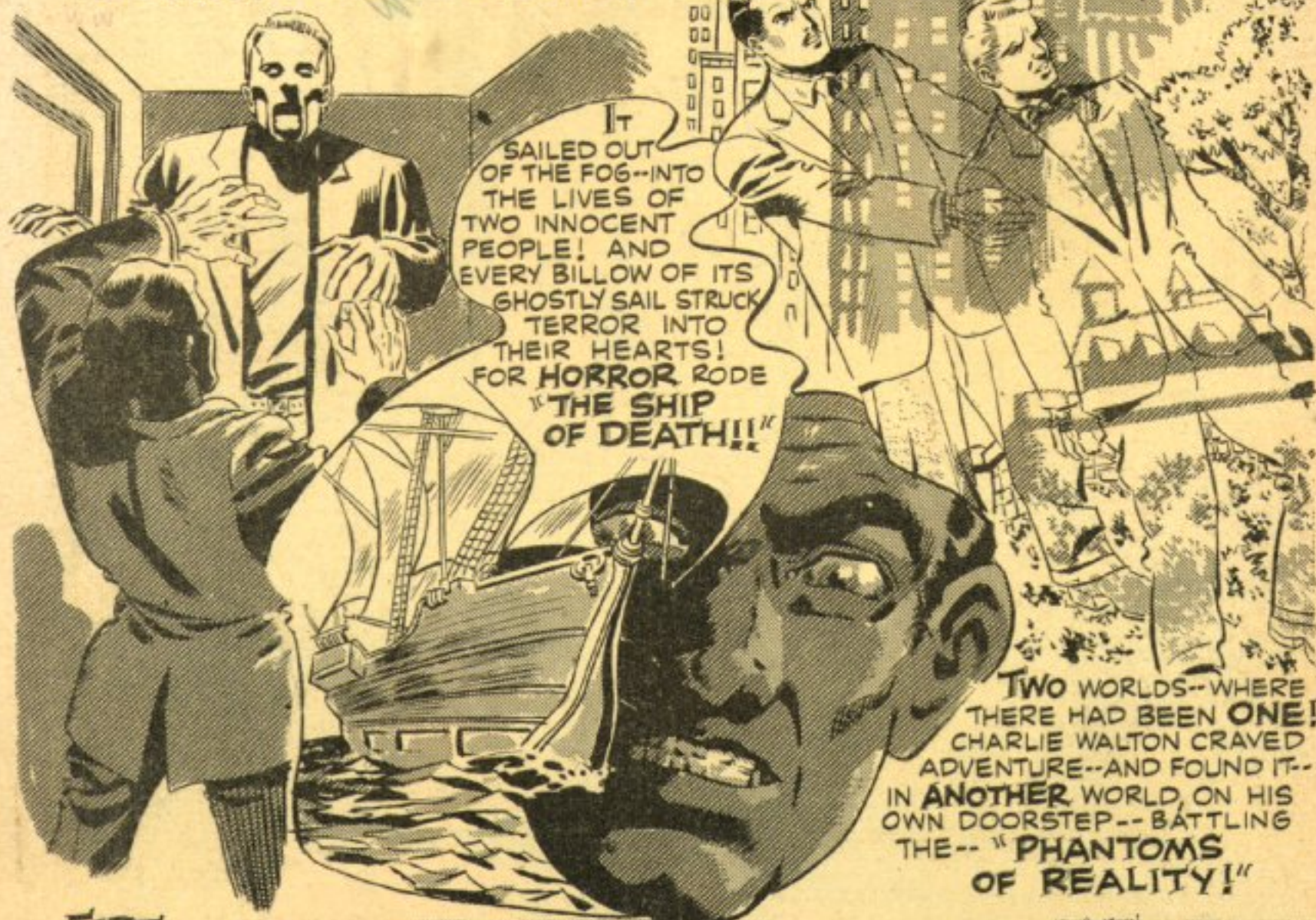


PHANTOMS
OF REALITY
THE SHIP
OF DEATH
CREMATION
OF EVIL
THE PUPPET
PULLS
THE STRINGS



WEB COMIC
UNIVERSE.COM

WHAT **MONSTER** HAS HE CREATED?
WHO SERVES WHOM, THE MASTER
OR THE GIANT DOLL OF WOOD?
WHO KILLS, AND WHO DIES, WHEN---
"THE PUPPET PULLS THE STRINGS!"



TWO WORLDS--WHERE THERE HAD BEEN ONE! CHARLIE WALTON CRAVED ADVENTURE--AND FOUND IT--IN ANOTHER WORLD, ON HIS OWN DOORSTEP--BATTLING THE-- "PHANTOMS OF REALITY!"

FIRE
BURNS
HUNGRILY!!
AND UP IN
GREY WISPS
OF SMOKE
GOES A
NAMELESS
SOMETHING,
FREEING
RICHARD
SINCLAIR
FROM HIS
PACT WITH
THE FORCES
OF BLACKNESS!
LICKING
FLAMES CLUTCH
A BEAUTIFUL
WOMAN EAGERLY,
ANXIOUS TO
BE FINISHED
WITH THEIR--
"CREMATION
OF EVIL!!"



Cremation of EVIL



THE BOTTOMLESS SLIME OF DEGREDDATION WOULD SEEM THE NATURAL HOME OF EVIL... BUT BEAUTY CAN BE A RESTING PLACE FOR THE TALONS OF DEPRAVITY! WHEN A MAN REALIZES THAT HIS INTENSE DESIRE TO BREAK THE NATURAL LAWS OF LIFE HAS CALLED A GREAT EVIL INTO THE WORLD, THEN HIS VERY SOUL SHRINKS FROM THE HORROR HE HAS CAUSED... AND HE KNOWS HE WILL NEVER BE FREE UNTIL THIS HORROR IS GONE!

REMEMBER, RICHARD DARLING... I DON'T WANT ANY TEARS! AND WHEN I DIE...I...WANT ... TO...BE...CREMATED! DON'T FORGET THAT.

NO! YOU MUSTN'T TALK THAT WAY! NOTHING'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU!

PLEASE, MR. SINCLAIR!

YOU'RE EXCITING YOUR WIFE TOO MUCH. ANY SUDDEN STRAIN MIGHT BE TOO MUCH FOR HER.

BUT, DOCTOR... SHE CAN'T DIE! SHE CAN'T!

IT BEGAN WITH LOVE... THIS TALE OF EVIL. BARBARA SINCLAIR WAS DYING...



**CAN THE
WILL OF
ONE MAN
KEEP A
LOVED
ONE FROM
DEATH?
AT THIS
MOMENT
IT DIDN'T
SEEM SO,
BECAUSE...**

WH-WHAT IS IT,
DOCTOR? WHAT'S
THE MATTER?
WHY ARE YOU
SO QUIET?

I'M SORRY, MR. SINCLAIR. YOUR WIFE IS ... GONE!

**YOU LET HER DIE!
GET OUT OF HERE!
GET OUT AND LEAVE
ME ALONE WITH
MY WIFE, BEFORE I...**

YOU DON'T KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE SAYING,
MAN. I'LL WAIT FOR
YOU IN THE
OUTER ROOM.

PLEASE, DARLING... DON'T
LEAVE ME! YOU'RE ALL I
HAVE IN THE WORLD!
PLEASE... PLEASE...
OPEN YOUR EYES!

DOES ANY MAN KNOW WHAT DEATH IS?
RICHARD SINCLAIR DIDN'T...AND HE DIDN'T
CARE! HE KNEW JUST ONE THING... *HIS
WIFE MUST LIVE AGAIN!*

THERE MUST BE SOME POWER THAT WILL
BRING YOU BACK TO ME! EVEN THE POWER
OF EVIL... *YES!* I CALL ON THE POWER
OF EVIL TO HELP ME! *HELP ME!!*

WH-WHAT HAPPENED?
WHY ARE YOU
SO UPSET?

YOU...YOU
ARE ALIVE!
I KNEW IT!
KNEW IT!!
CTOR...COME
QUICKLY!!

ООННННННННН!

**SEE? I TOLD YOU ...
SHE'S ALIVE!**

IT'S NOT POSSIBLE!
IT MUST BE A
MIRACLE! COME...
LET ME FEEL
YOUR PULSE...

**NO! GET AWAY!
DON'T COME
NEAR ME!**

MAKE HIM GO
AWAY, RICHARD!
DON'T LET HIM
TOUCH ME!

BUT, MRS. SINCLAIR...YOU
DON'T UNDERSTAND! THIS IS
SOMETHING UNHEARD OF IN
MEDICAL SCIENCE, AND...

YOU HEARD HER, DOCTOR!
YOU BLUNDERED ONCE
BEFORE... AND I WON'T
HAVE YOU TOUCHING
MY WIFE AGAIN! GET
OUT... AND THIS
TIME... DON'T COME
BACK!

ONCE RICHARD WAS SURE DR. JONES WAS OUT OF THE HOUSE, HE RACED BACK TO THE BEDROOM...

DARLING! YOU SHOULDN'T BE GETTING UP SO SOON! WAIT... I'LL HELP YOU!

NO! I DON'T WANT ANYBODY TO TOUCH ME... DO YOU HEAR? I NEVER FELT BETTER IN MY... UH... LIFE!



AND LATER --

HERE! YOU MUST BE STARVED. I KNOW I AM...

NO... I DON'T HAVE TO EAT... I MEAN... I'M NOT HUNGRY. YOU GO AHEAD!



THAT WAS THE FIRST STRANGENESS. THE SECOND CAME THAT NIGHT...

BARBARA! IT'S FOUR IN THE MORNING! AREN'T YOU COMING TO BED?

I TOLD YOU NOT TO BOTHER ME! I'M PERFECTLY ALL RIGHT HERE!



AND SO IT WAS FOR TWO DAYS, AND THEN...

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, BARBARA? YOU HAVEN'T EATEN OR SLEPT FOR DAYS! IT ISN'T... HUMAN!

DON'T EVER SAY THAT!... DON'T YOU THINK YOU SHOULD ANSWER THE DOOR BELL? MUST BE THE MAID.



OH, MR. SINCLAIR... I HEAR THAT MRS. SINCLAIR IS UP AND ABOUT! I THINK THAT'S WONDERFUL NEWS.

YES, IT IS, ANNIE. BUT I'M GLAD YOU'RE STAYING OVERNIGHT THIS TIME. THINGS ARE IN A TERRIBLE MESS.



THAT NIGHT --

WHERE'S MRS. SINCLAIR? ISN'T SHE EATING NOW?

NO, ANNIE... SHE'S NOT HUNGRY. OH... I LEFT MY PIPE IN THE LIBRARY. WOULD YOU MIND GETTING IT FOR ME?



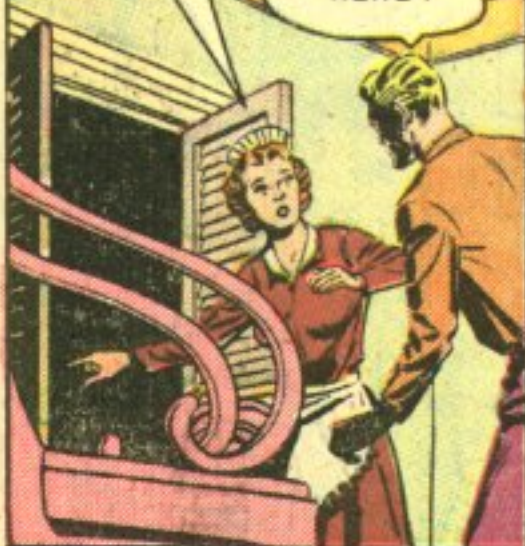
RICHARD WAS WAITING FOR ANNE TO COME BACK WITH HIS PIPE, WHEN A SCREAM OF HORRORSPLIT THE AIR...



ANNIE! WHAT IS IT? WHERE ARE YOU?

MR. SINCLAIR...
IN THE LIBRARY...
IT WAS DARK...
TWO BIG GREEN
EYES GLOWING...

NOW... NOW...
ANNIE! I'M
SURE YOU'RE
IMAGINING THINGS.
THERE ARE
NO ANIMALS
HERE!



HERE... YOU'LL SEE
IT WAS NOTHING!



BARBARA!
WHAT ARE
YOU DOING
HERE?

I LIKE
TO SIT IN THE
DARK!



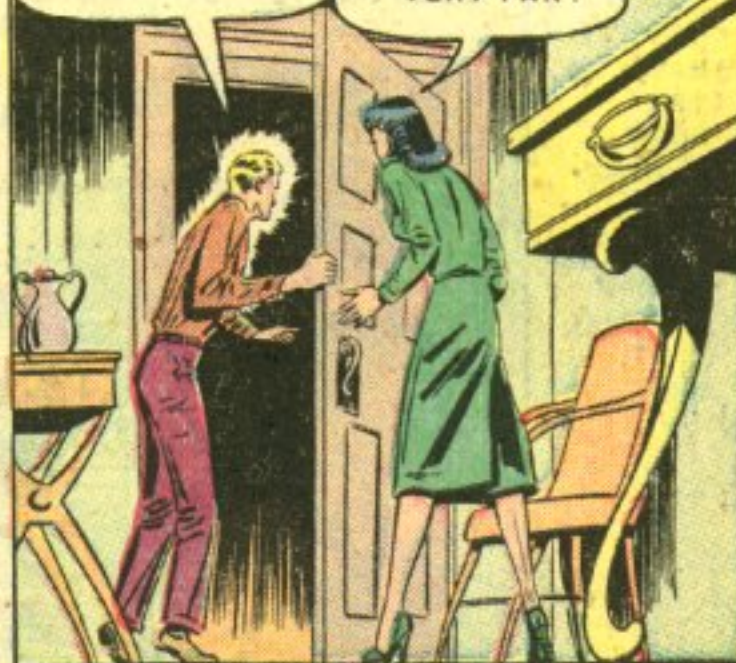
ANNIE? I THOUGHT
YOU WERE STAYING
OVERNIGHT!

NOT IN THIS HOUSE, I
WON'T! THERE'S SOME-
THING EVIL AROUND HERE,
AND I DON'T WANT ANY
PART OF IT!



BUT, ANNIE...
YOU PROMISED...

LET HER GO...
SHE WON'T GET
VERY FAR!



ANNIE
RUSHED AWAY
FROM THE
HOUSE WITH
THE TERROR
OF THE UN-
KNOWN GNAW-
ING AT HER
NERVES.
EVERY SHAD-
OW BROUGHT
HINTS OF
HORROR, AND
EVERY SOUND
SEEMED TO BE
A FOLLOWING
FOOTSTEP...



I'M BEING
FOLLOWED! I
KNOW IT!

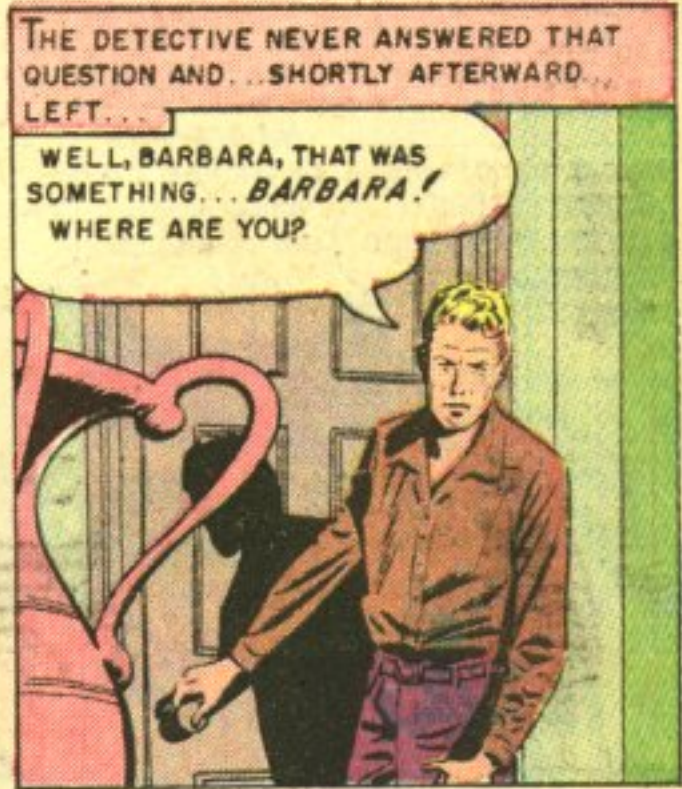
AND... ALMOST AS THOUGH SPRINGING FROM THE
SILENT AIR... THE HORROR CAME...

THE EYES!
AARGH! HHH!





A
SHORT
WHILE
LATER...



RICHARD MOVED WITH DESPERATE SPEED...

THE LIBRARY!
...SHE MIGHT BE
IN THERE!

RICHARD
SNAPPED
ON THE
LIGHT...

OH...THERE YOU
ARE! THERE'S
BEEN A TERRIBLE
ACCIDENT...

I KNOW ALL
ABOUT IT!

RICHARD RUSHED FORWARD TO TAKE
BARBARA IN HIS ARMS. AS HE TOUCHED
HER, HE RECOILED...

YOU'RE COLD! LIKE
A DEAD PERSON!...
AND YOU KNEW ABOUT
THE DETECTIVE!
HOW COULD...

HA-HA-HA!
OF COURSE I
KNEW ABOUT
HIM... I KILLED
HIM!

WHAT KIND OF HORROR DID I
CALL BACK INTO THE WORLD!
...YOU'RE EVIL...
EVIL!!

YOU
WANTED ME SO
BADLY, YOU ASKED
THE POWERS OF
EVIL TO HELP YOU!
BUT...NOW THAT
YOU KNOW...

I'LL SNAP
YOUR NECK
LIKE I
SNAPPED
THEIRS!

THE CANDLES!
FIRE... MAYBE
FIRE WILL
STOP HER!



ARGH! GET
IT AWAY!

STAY BACK, OR
I'LL TOSS THESE
CANDLES AT YOU!

RICHARD
PICKED UP
THE CANDLES
AND WHIRLED.
THE EFFECT
WAS INSTAN-
TANEOUS...



ALL RICHARD COULD THINK OF WAS GETTING
HELP. HE RAN TO THE TELEPHONE IN THE
LIBRARY AND BARRICADED THE DOOR...

THIS **MUST** HOLD
UNTIL I CAN GET
THE POLICE!



BUT THE STRENGTH OF THE MONSTER THAT WAS BARBARA FOUND THE BARRICADED DOOR TO BE NO PROBLEM...

HURRY...
FOR HEAVEN'S
SAKE...

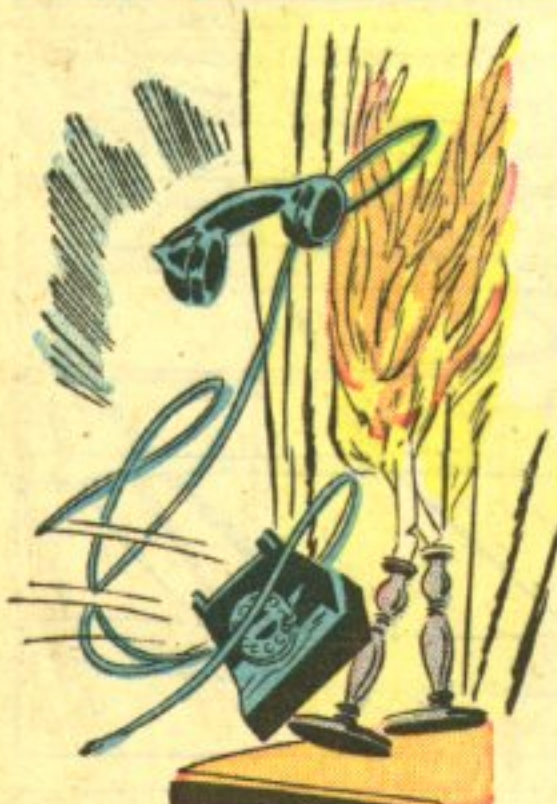
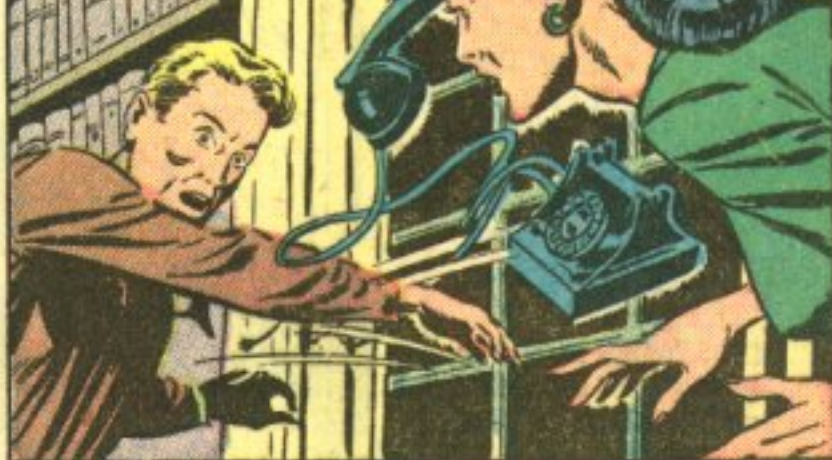
DON'T
TRY TO
ESCAPE!



RICHARD PULLED THE PHONE LOOSE FROM THE WALL AND THREW IT...

HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!

STAY
AWAY FROM
ME!



THE FIRE
SPREAD
RAPIDLY AND
BARBARA
WAS SUR-
ROUNDED
BY THE
RISING
FLAME!

AAIEE! HELP ME,
HELP ME, RICHARD...
YOU LOVED ME!

YOU'RE
BEYOND
HELP!



RICHARD RUSHED FROM THE
HOUSE...

WE
HAD AN URGENT
CALL FROM THIS
PLACE, MISTER.

IT'S ALL
RIGHT
NOW!

BETTER
SEND IN A
FIRE ALARM,
JOE.



I WAS
PASSING
BY! WHAT
A TERRIBLE
THING!

OH...
DOCTOR
JONES!
IT'S NOT
TOO
TERRIBLE!



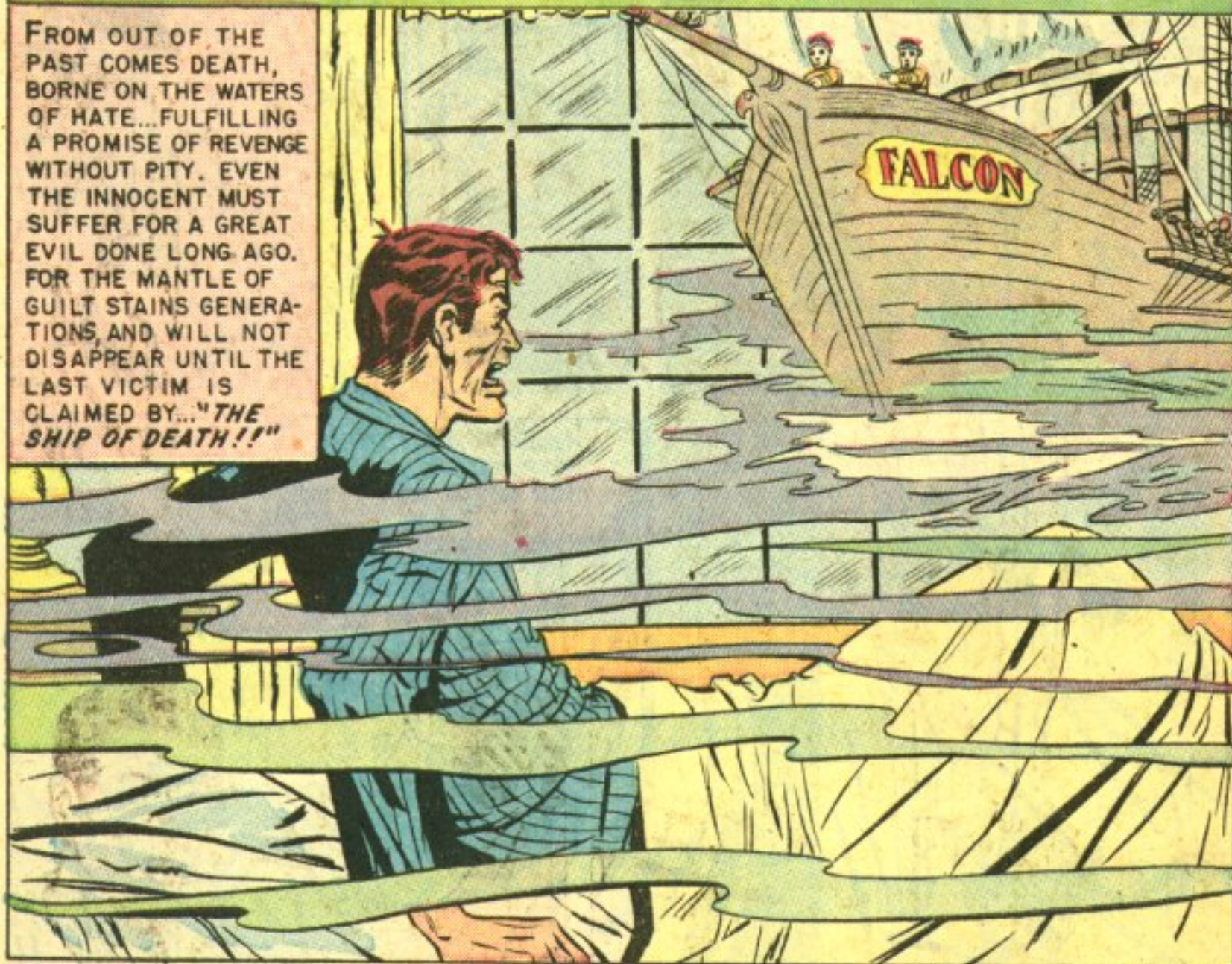
BUT...
YOUR WIFE?
WHAT
HAPPENED
TO HER?

SHE DIED
SEVERAL DAYS
AGO...THE
DAY YOU WERE
AT THE HOUSE!
SHE SAID SHE
WANTED TO BE
CREMATED.



The SHIP of DEATH!

FROM OUT OF THE PAST COMES DEATH, BORNE ON THE WATERS OF HATE...FULFILLING A PROMISE OF REVENGE WITHOUT PITY. EVEN THE INNOCENT MUST SUFFER FOR A GREAT EVIL DONE LONG AGO. FOR THE MANTLE OF GUILT STAINS GENERATIONS, AND WILL NOT DISAPPEAR UNTIL THE LAST VICTIM IS CLAIMED BY..."THE SHIP OF DEATH!!"



IT BEGAN EARLY ONE MORNING IN THE SMALL SEA-PORT TOWN OF CARVER, MAINE, DICK CARTWRIGHT AND HIS WIFE, ELLEN, ARRIVED TO CLAIM A LEGACY LEFT THEM BY DICK'S GRAND-FATHER...

THE HOUSE LOOKS SO FORBIDDING.

ONCE WE GET IT FIXED UP, IT'LL LOOK A LOT BETTER. SAY... DRIVER, COULD YOU HELP US IN WITH OUR BAGS?

ARE YOU ONE OF THE CART-WRIGHTS?

WHY...YES I AM. IN FACT I'M ABOUT THE ONLY CARTWRIGHT LEFT IN THE WORLD. BUT I CAN'T SEE WHAT DIFFERENCE THAT MAKES.

LISTEN, MR. "LAST" CARTWRIGHT... I WOULDN'T HELP YOU INTO *THAT* HOUSE FOR THE BIGGEST TIP IN THE WORLD.



DICK TOOK HIS SUITCASES FROM THE TAXI, AND THE DRIVER RUSHED AWAY, AS THOUGH ANXIOUS TO ESCAPE FROM SOME UNSEEN HORROR.

I DON'T BLAME HIM! IT'S SO DARK AND GLOOMY. DICK... I'M AFRAID!

DON'T BE SILLY, DARLING. IT'S JUST THAT EVER SINCE MY GRAND-FATHER DIED, THE PLACE HASN'T BEEN CARED FOR.



LOOK AT THE DIFFERENCE A LITTLE LIGHT MAKES! ONCE YOU GET RID OF SOME OF THE DUST... YOU'LL SEE IT'S A WONDERFUL PLACE.



I... I DON'T KNOW, DICK. I JUST WISH WE DIDN'T HAVE TO STAY HERE.

LATER...

I GUESS I WAS A LITTLE FOOLISH... ACTING LIKE A SCHOOL-GIRL. SINCE BERTHA CAME TO HELP ME CLEAN UP, I FEEL MUCH BETTER.

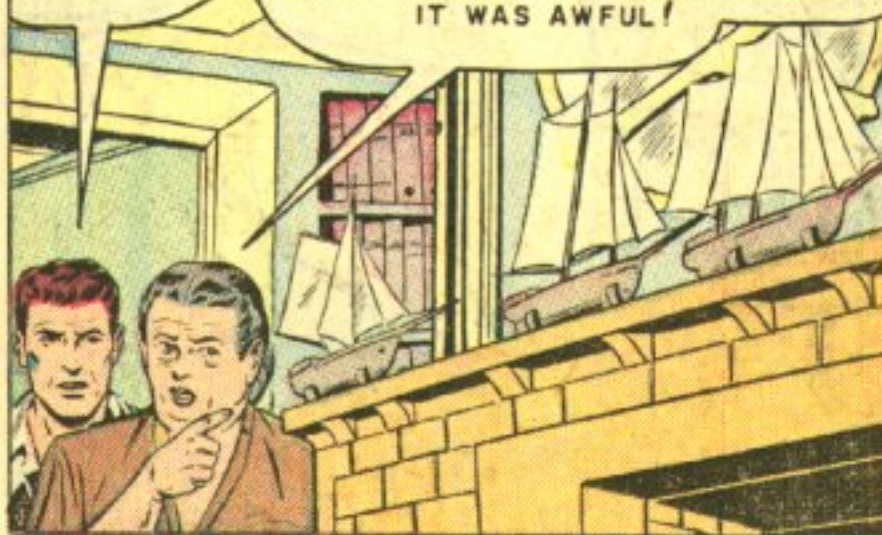
AIEEEEE!

WHAT'S THAT?



WHAT'S THE TROUBLE, BERTHA! WHAT FRIGHTENED YOU?

THE SHIPS, MR. CARTWRIGHT! I WANTED TO MOVE THEM AROUND AND PUT ONE OF THEM IN THAT EMPTY SPACE, AND...AND WHEN I TOUCHED THE EMPTY SPACE... I... I FELT SOMETHING. I DON'T KNOW... IT WAS AWFUL!



I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE!

BUT, BERTHA...YOU CAN'T LEAVE US NOW. LOOK... I'M SURE IT WAS YOUR IMAGINATION.



DICK PICKED UP ONE OF THE SHIP MODELS AND PLACED IT ON THE EMPTY SPOT ON THE MANTEL. HE RECOILED WITH HORROR AS...SEEMINGLY IMBUED WITH A LIFE OF ITS OWN... THE MODEL WRITHED OUT OF HIS HAND AND TOPPLED TO THE FLOOR!

YOU SEE, IT'S...
ARRRRGHH!



DICK WAS ABLE TO INDUCE BERTHA TO STAY A WHILE LONGER... AT LEAST UNTIL THE HOUSE WAS A LITTLE CLEANER.

I'M GOING TO WANDER AROUND TOWN A LITTLE BIT, AND SEE IF I CAN PICK UP ANY INFORMATION ABOUT WHY PEOPLE REFER TO THIS PLACE SO STRANGELY.

DON'T BE LONG! I FEEL AS THOUGH SOMETHING TERRIBLE IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN!



AFTER HE REACHED THE CENTER OF THE SMALL TOWN... SOMETHING SEEMED TO DRAW DICK TO THE WATERFRONT.

SO THIS IS THE PIER MY GRANDFATHER OWNED BEFORE HE RETIRED. I WONDER WHY HE GAVE UP HIS SHIPPING COMPANY?



PERHAPS DICK CARTWRIGHT THOUGHT HE WAS WANDERING AIMLESSLY... PERHAPS HE *WAS* CONSCIOUS OF THE FORCE THAT DREW HIM TO A SMALL SHOP IN A NARROW STREET NEAR THE PIER...

THIS IS A STRANGE LITTLE SHOP... NOTHING BUT SHIP MODELS.



ALMOST UNTHINKING, DICK OPENED THE DOOR OF THE SHOP AND STEPPED INSIDE...

AH...MR. CARTWRIGHT... IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU?

H...HOW DID YOU KNOW MY NAME?



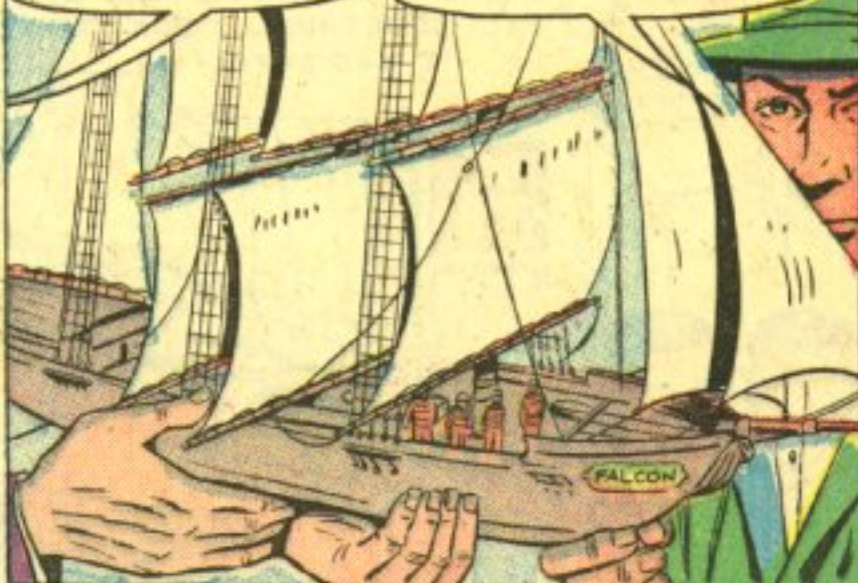
I KNOW...HA, HA...MANY THINGS! PERHAPS YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A SHIP MODEL...SOMETHING TO FILL AN EMPTY SPACE ON A MANTEL?

WELL... I... I...



I HAVE JUST THE THING FOR YOU. THIS MODEL IS THE FINEST IN THE ENTIRE SHOP.

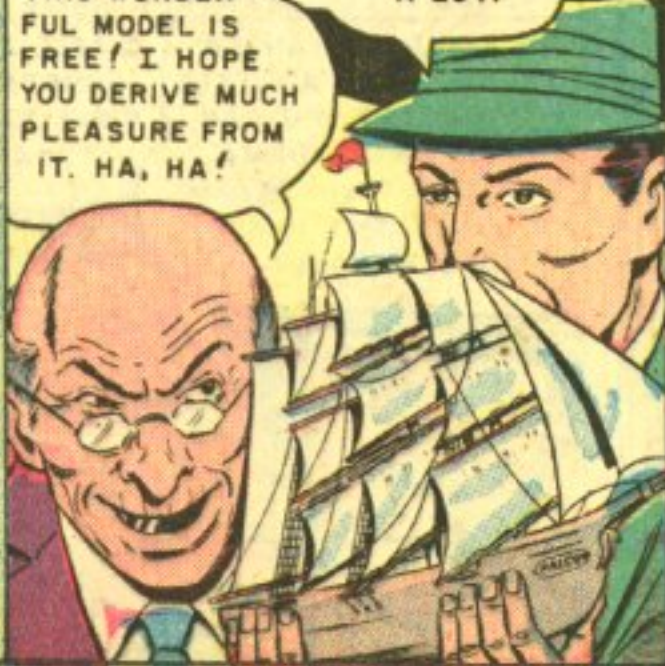
WHY...IT'S AMAZING! I NEVER SAW ANYTHING LIKE IT. HOW MUCH DO YOU WANT FOR IT?



THE WAYS OF FATE ARE STRANGE. AN INHERITANCE... AN AIMLESS STROLL... A PERFECT SHIP MODEL, ALL SO INNOCENT. AND YET, THE SUM TOTAL OF GREAT EVIL! BUT HOW WAS DICK CARTWRIGHT TO KNOW?

FOR YOU, MR. CARTWRIGHT, THIS WONDERFUL MODEL IS FREE! I HOPE YOU DERIVE MUCH PLEASURE FROM IT. HA, HA!

THAT'S TERRIBLY NICE OF YOU. THANKS A LOT.



DICK COULD HARDLY WAIT TO GET HOME WITH HIS PRIZE...

I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HOME...BERTHA LEFT ABOUT AN HOUR AGO. WHAT DID YOU FIND OUT?

FIND OUT? I FORGOT ALL ABOUT IT...BUT LOOK AT WHAT I HAVE. THE PERFECT MODEL FOR THAT BARE SPOT ON THE MANTEL!



PLEASE DON'T!
REMEMBER
WHAT HAP-
PENED BEFORE!

BUT *THIS ONE* STAYS!
IT *DOESN'T* FALL OFF!
ISN'T IT A WONDERFUL
PIECE OF WORK?



NO! IT'S HORRIBLE! WHOEVER CARVED
THE FIGURES, HAD TOO GREAT AN INSIGHT
INTO DESPERATION! LET'S GET
RID OF IT!



ALL THIS NONSENSE IS GOING
TOO FAR! FIRST THE HOUSE...
NOW THE MODEL...IT'S ABOUT
TIME YOU LEARNED TO CON-
TROL YOUR NERVES.

YOU
NEEDN'T SHOUT
AT ME!



THERE WAS A STRAINED SILENCE
IN THE HOUSE UNTIL BEDTIME.
AND THEN, SLEEP WAS UNEASY...
PUNCTUATED BY DREAMS...
DREAMS OF HORROR AND MYS-
TERY. YET...WHEN A DREAM
IS SHARED BY TWO PEOPLE...
CAN IT ONLY BE A DREAM?



A DREAM...AND YET, NOT A DREAM.
TWO SMALL FIGURES ON A SHIP
OUT OF THE PAST... KNOWING IT
COULDN'T BE HAPPENING, AND
YET, DREADFULLY AFRAID!

DICK! DICK!
WE'RE ON THE
SHIP!

IT'S ONLY A
DREAM, DARLING...
BUT IT'S SO
REAL!



THE MAST! IT'S
GOING TO FALL ON
US!

LOOK OUT!

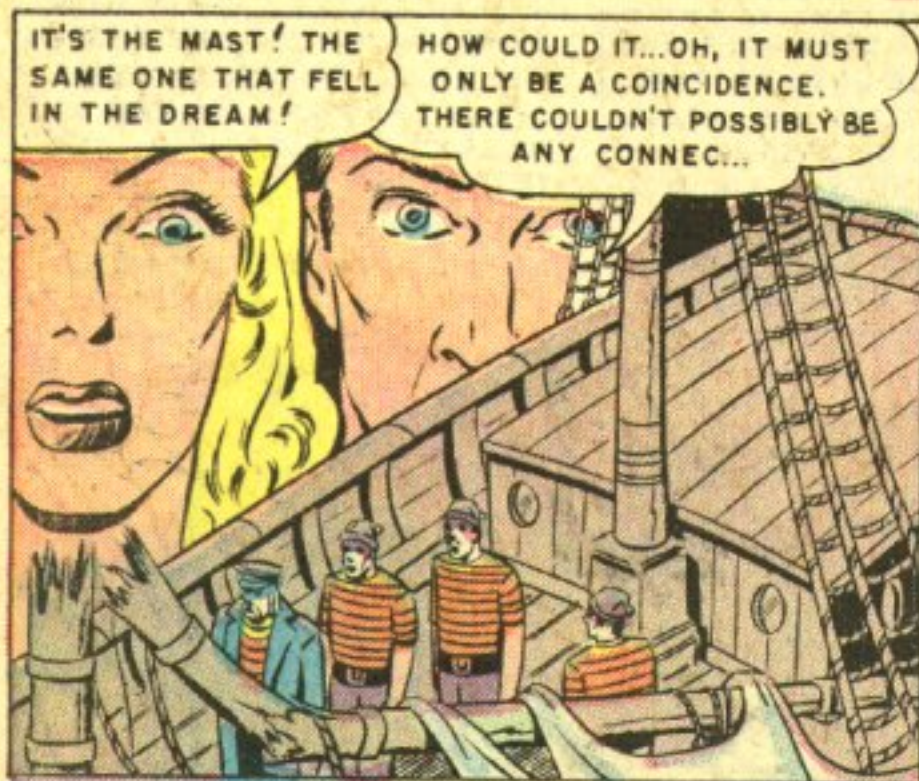
CRACK!



ARGGHHH!

CRAASH





CAN YOU HELP ME?
I'M LOOKING FOR A
SHOP THAT SPECIAL-
IZES IN MODEL SHIPS.

THERE AIN'T NO
SUCH PLACE IN ALL
OF CARVER!



BUT YESTERDAY I WAS IN A
SHOP AND BOUGHT A MODEL OF
THE FALCON. YOU MUST KNOW
ABOUT IT!

THE FALCON
YOU SAY. AYE...
THAT SHIP I
KNOW...BUT
NOTHING ABOUT
ANY SHOP.



WHAT DO
YOU KNOW
ABOUT THE
FALCON?

SHE WAS THE
PRIDE OF CARVER...
SHE SAILED OUT
OF PORT ONE DAY
AND NEVER CAME
BACK.



THERE WAS SOME AS SAID SHE
WAS SENT OUT WITHOUT ENOUGH
WATER AND RATIONS FOR HER
JOURNEY, SO THE OWNER COULD
COLLECT INSURANCE ON HER.
SOME SAY THE SOULS OF THEM
SUFFERIN' SAILORS ARE WAN-
DERIN' THE SEAS UNTIL THE
LAST OF THE OWNER'S KIN IS
WIPED OUT!



WHO...WHO
WERE THE
OWNERS
OF THE
SHIP?

NAME OF CART-
WRIGHT! AND I
UNDERSTAND
THERE'S ONE
LEFT!



FEAR GRIPPED DICK CARTWRIGHT LIKE A LIV-
ING THING...

GOT TO PACK AND GET
AWAY FROM HERE!



ELLEN! WE'RE
LEAVING THIS
PLACE TODAY!

THANK HEAVENS! BUT...
THAT TERRIBLE STORM!
WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT
UNTIL IT LETS UP...



BUT THE STORM DIDN'T LET UP. IF ANYTHING, IT GREW MORE FIERCE.

I'VE NEVER SEEN A STORM LIKE THAT...

I'M GOING INTO THE STUDY FOR A MOMENT.

ELLEN WAS STARTLED BY A SUDDEN KNOCK AT THE FRONT DOOR...

WHO WOULD BE OUT IN THIS STORM?

THE STRANGE FIGURE ENTERED THE STUDY AND CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND HIM...

I CAN'T...GET...IT... OPEN! DICK! DICK! WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THERE?

THE SAILOR BRUSHED PAST HER AND WALKED DIRECTLY TOWARDS THE STUDY...

WAIT! WAIT! DON'T GO IN THERE!

I CAN FIND MY WAY, MA'AM.

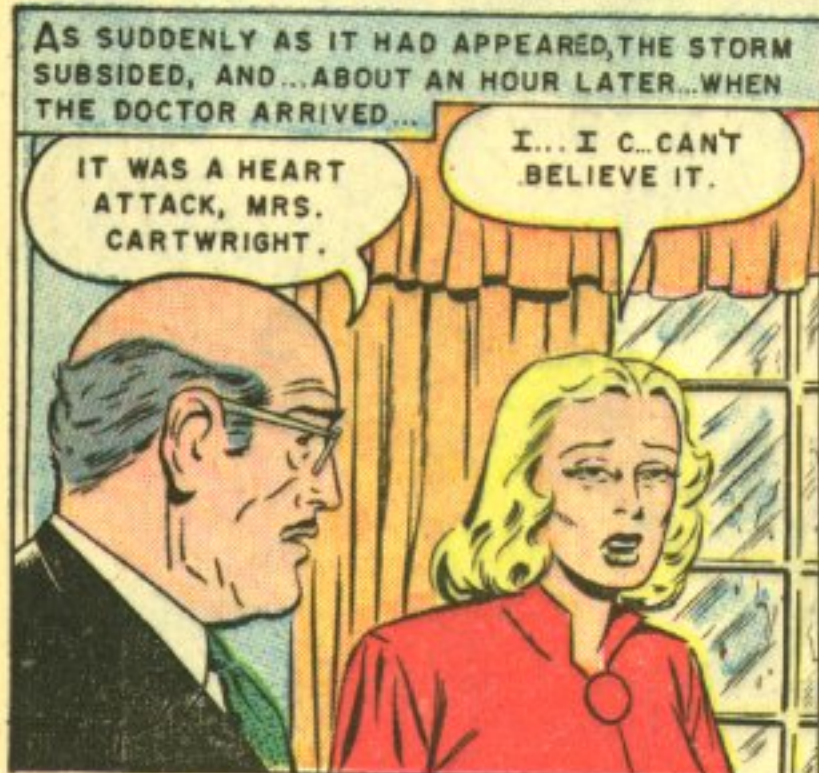
I'M HERE TO SEE MR. CARTWRIGHT!

Y..YES?

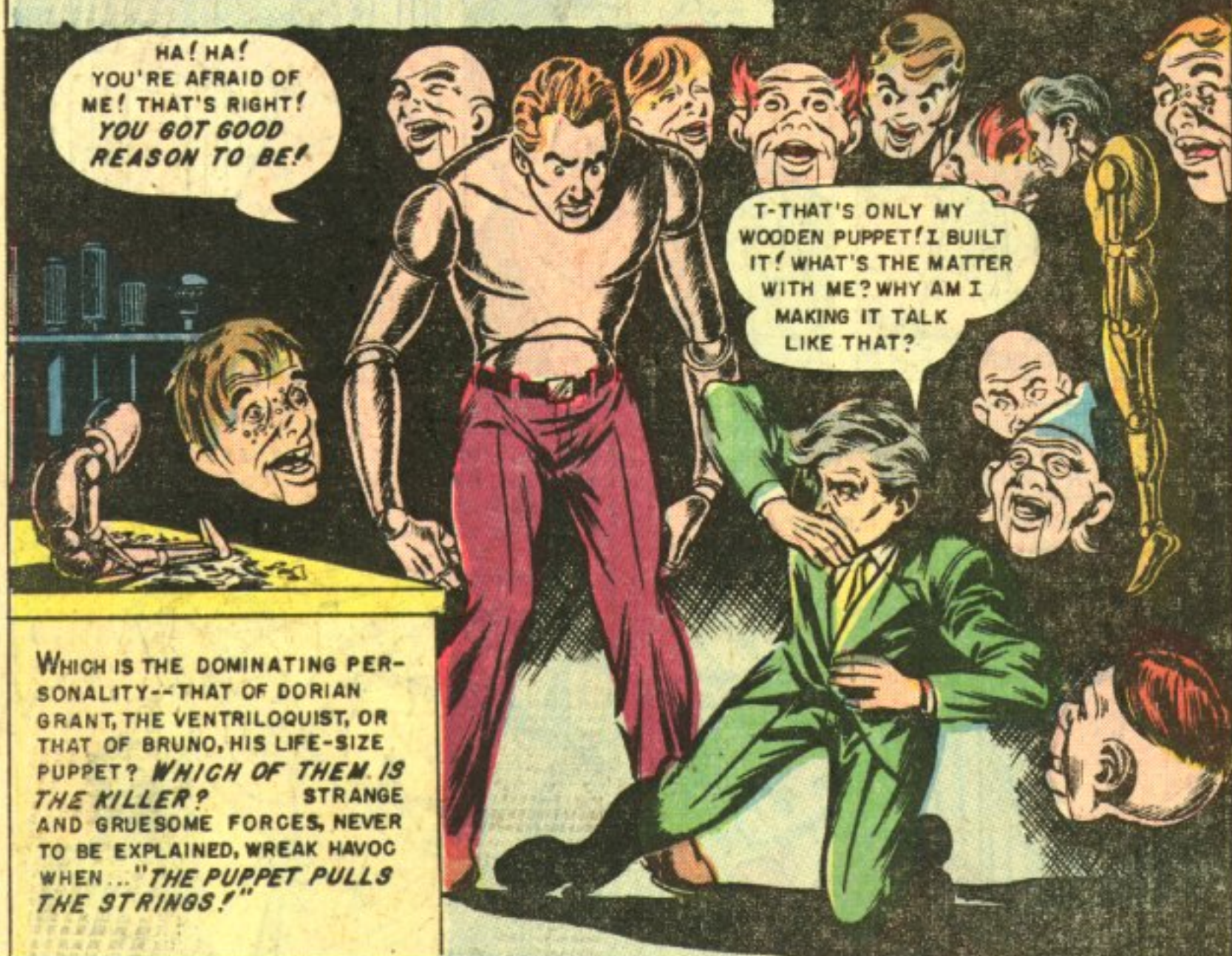
MEANWHILE, IN THE STUDY...

NO! NO! I KNOW YOU! YOU'RE FROM...

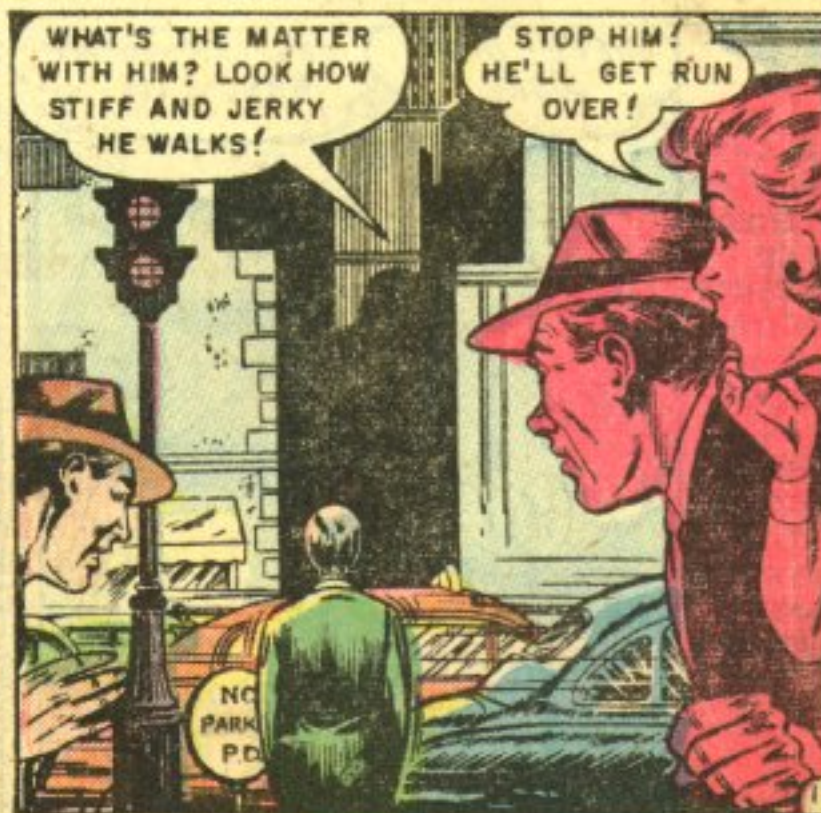
AYE! FIRST MATE OF THE FALCON! AN' YOU'RE THE LAST OF THE SCURVY CARTWRIGHTS!

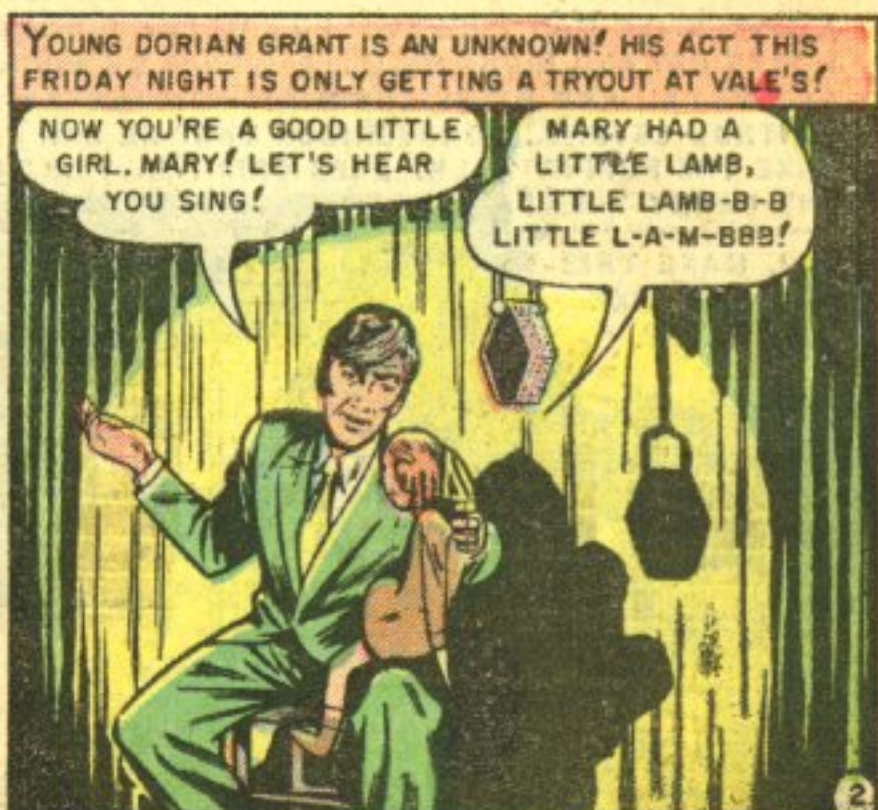
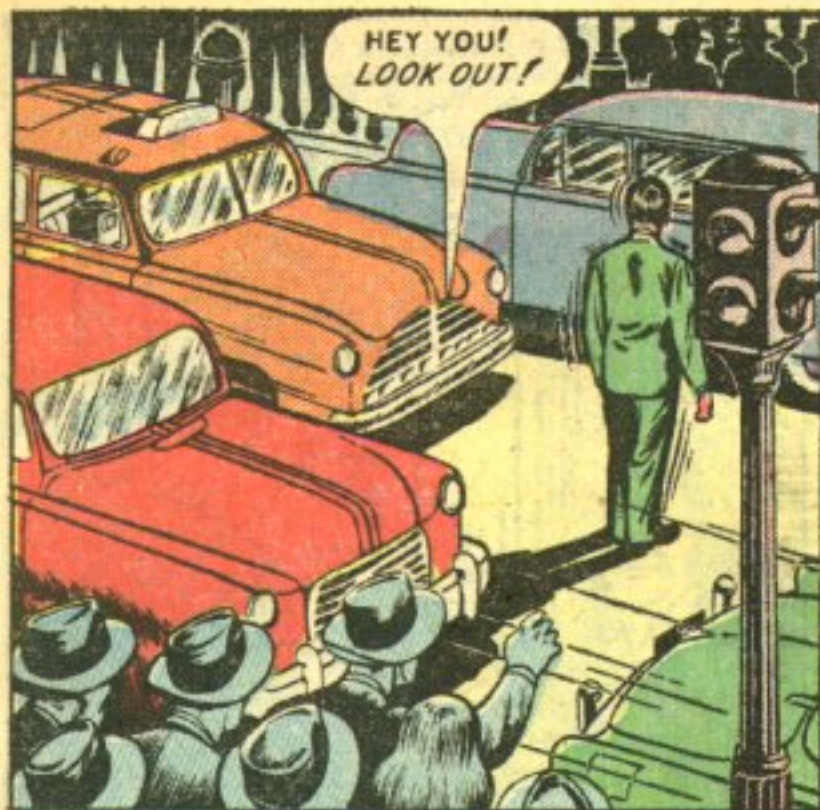


The PUPPET PULLS The STRINGS



A SUMMER EVENING IN THE CITY OF PLEASANTVILLE.







A LIFE-SIZED MAN PUPPET! FOR WEEKS DORIAN WORKS DAY AND NIGHT ON IT... A FIGURE OF WOOD AND METAL AND STEEL SPRINGS! WITH MECHANICAL CONTROL-LEVERS... SO INGENUOUS THAT HE CAN MAKE THE PUPPET WALK. EVEN GRIP HEAVY OBJECTS AND CARRY THEM!



NOW AT LAST BRUNO IS FINISHED AND DORIAN BEGINS REHEARSING HIS NEW ACT!

YAH! THIS AUDIENCE IS JUST A BUNCH OF CROOKS!

NOW, BRUNO, TAKE IT EASY!

THIS IS SURE GOOD STUFF!

THEN ONE DAY, AS DORIAN REHEARSES...

YOU'RE GETTING AFRAID OF ME YOURSELF, EH, BOSS? WELL, YOU GOT REASONS TO BE!

WHA...?

SUDDENLY, DORIAN REALIZES THE PUPPET SAYS THINGS HE HADN'T PLANNED TO SAY!

I MUST BE CRAZY! IT'S BECAUSE I'VE MADE BRUNO SO LIFE-LIKE!

AGAIN IN VALE'S OFFICE, DORIAN DEMONSTRATES HIS NEW ACT!

SEE THAT LITTLE FELLA...FER TWO CENTS I'D KICK HIS TEETH IN! YAH!

NOW, NOW, BRUNO...!

UGH!

HOW DO YOU LIKE IT, MR. VALE? DO I GET THE JOB?

NO, YOU DON'T! IT'S REVOLTING! YOU GET OUT OF HERE!

THE DISAPPOINTED, MEEK DORIAN HARDLY REALIZES WHAT HE IS SUDDENLY MAKING HIS PUPPET SAY!

WHY YOU ROTTEN LITTLE SHRIMP, FER TWO CENTS I'D...

WHA...?

YOU GET OUT OF HERE, GRANT!

OKAY, MR. VALE, I'M GOING!

WHATEVER MADE ME SAY THAT? I DON'T WANT TO PICK A FIGHT WITH ANY-BODY!

DORIAN APPLIES AT ONE OF THE SMALLER THEATERS...



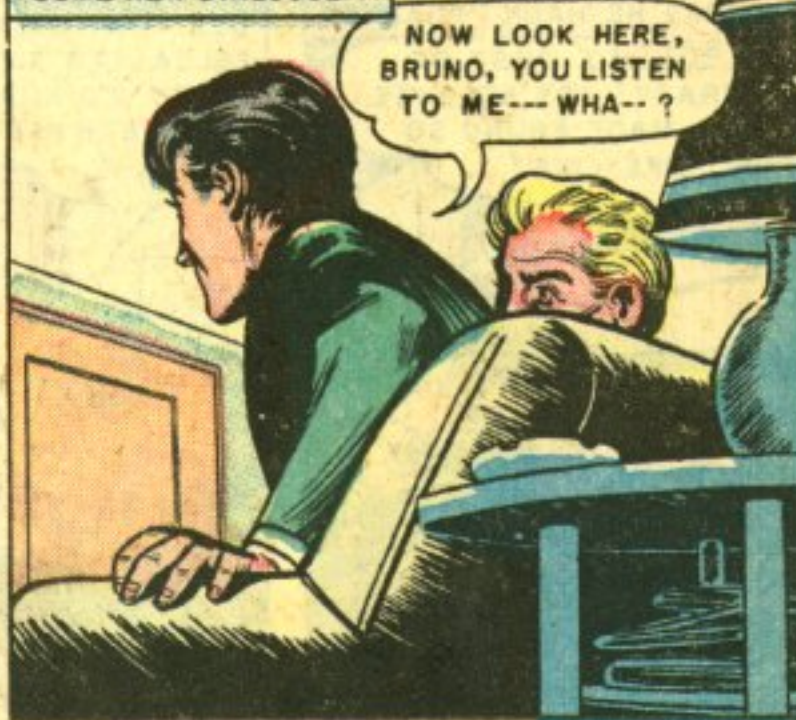
THE AUDIENCE LIKES IT! DORIAN'S ACT IS A HIT...



DORIAN'S FAME SPREADS! AND SOON VALE REALIZES HE MADE A MISTAKE...



THAT EVENING AS DORIAN IS WORKING OUT SOME NEW DIALOGUE...

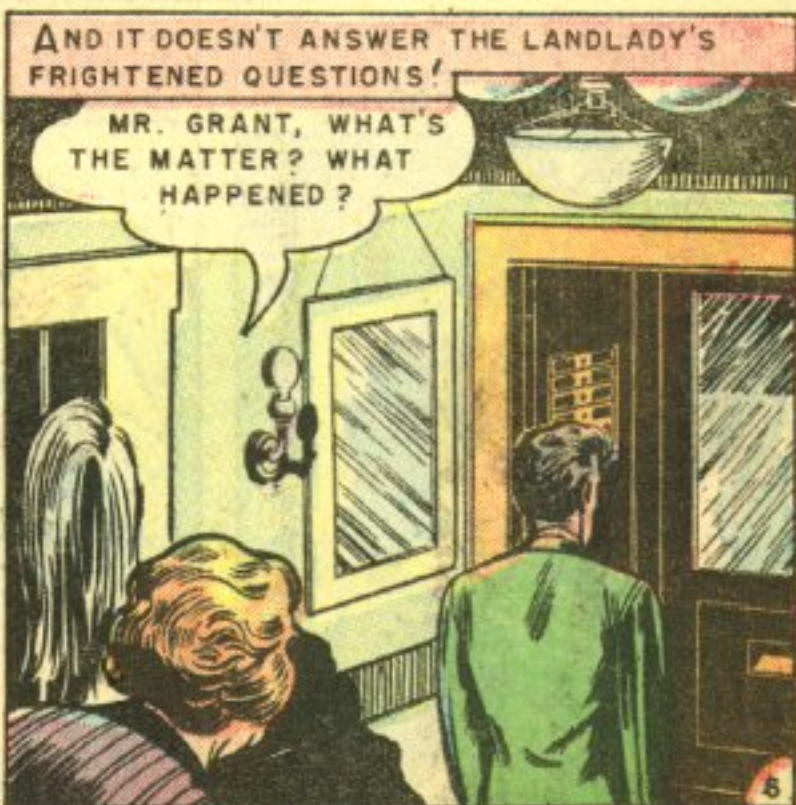
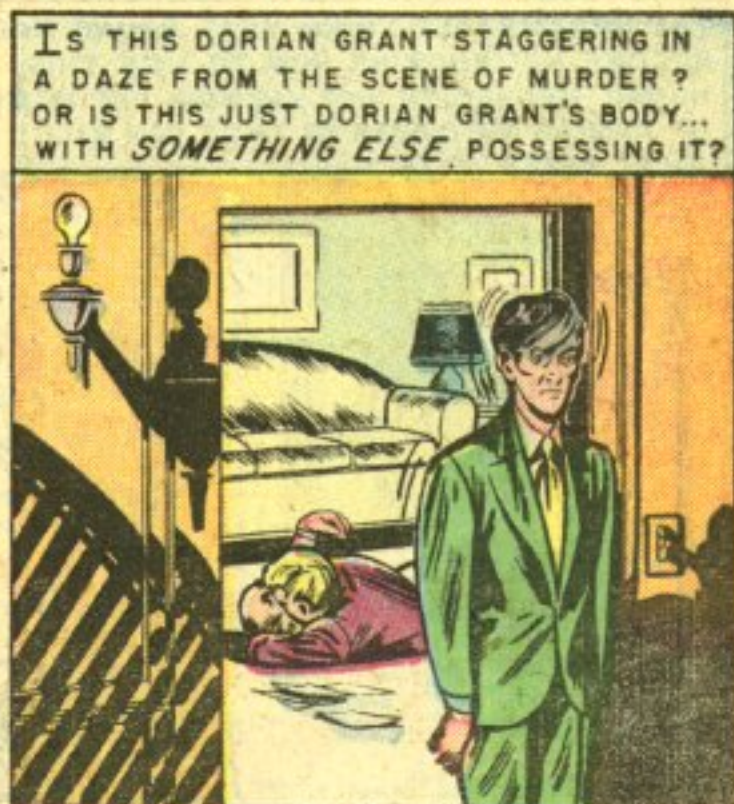


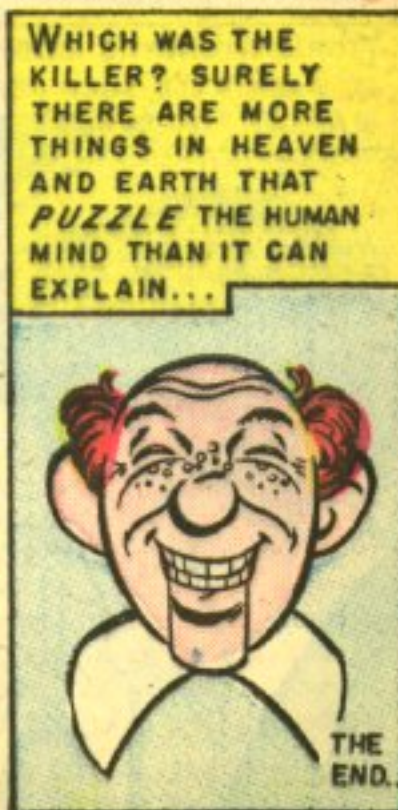
WHY, COME IN, MR. VALE! BRUNO AND I WERE JUST DOING SOME REHEARSING!



SUDDENLY DORIAN HEARS HIMSELF MAKING BRUNO ANSWER FOR HIM...







THE END.

THE HOUSE OF SKULLS!

Ellen gazed into the Chinese crystal. Its blue depths reflected the shifting colors of the old witch-woman's hut. The ball was ancient. It had been the property of the Emperors of China, and before that, of the legendary rulers of Sunken Lemuria. Into its depths had gone the sights and sounds of thousands of years of human history and horror. The crone sitting opposite Ellen laughed harshly.

"You want to see your lover again, eh? He whom they shot to death? I can do it . . . for a price!" She chuckled again, and rubbed her dried old hands.

Ellen had to find out the answer from the dead. There was a fortune in loot hidden by the man the cops had cut down.

"Gaze into the crystal, girl." The old witch's yellow eyes glared at the girl. "Gaze deep and watch, watch!"

Ellen stared into the ball's glow until she felt dizzy. The hut was whirling around her, vanishing into fog. The ball grew before her eyes. A greenish light seemed to flow from its depths and surround her, and then . . .

She was no longer sitting in the hut. She was standing on a stony path under the glare of a burning sky. Before her stretched a wall, a wicker-work of bones, yellow-brown and dusty. On top ran a line of skulls, leering at her through empty eye-sockets. There was a gate in that wall, and toward it she walked, reached out a hand as in a dream and opened it. She walked through.

She was in a garden out of a nightmare by Poe. A stony path led up to a small house. The path was bordered by skulls. Plants like snakes writhed and hissed in that garden, and there was the croaking of toads and the scuttling of crablike spiders amidst this living foliage. She

walked slowly toward the house. . . It was ghastly, incredible, yet it was vividly real. This was no dream. She knew that she had actually been transported — *somewhere!*

A figure came out of the house, stopped in the doorway, and looked at her. It was tall, thin. At a distance it looked like her Arnie. She called out his name. The figure raised its head, started down the path.

She walked towards it, then hesitated, stopped. It was Arnie, alive, walking, but . . . what a change! He looked as if he had lain in a grave for many months, drying, rotting, crumbling. Shreds of dried flesh clung to bones from which the life had long ago fled. The face was not that of the man she had known. . . only the eyes, the bright eyes rimmed in red, remained wide, glittering. The thing that had been Arnie came toward her. It opened its jaws, called her name in a crackling, grating voice.

She screamed then, wildly, frantically. She turned and fled from the man who had been her lover in life. She had a glimpse of an endless expanse of fire before her, then suddenly . . .

She was lying on the floor of the little hut and the witch was bending over her. Ellen got slowly to her feet, moaning. The crystal was shrouded in black. "Did you ask him what you wanted?" the witch whispered.

Ellen turned a horror-struck face towards the old crone. She shook her head slowly.

She had had the courage to go directly to the land beyond the grave in her search of greed. But she had not realized that there can never be a question of money or earthly loot in the eternal torments of Hell!

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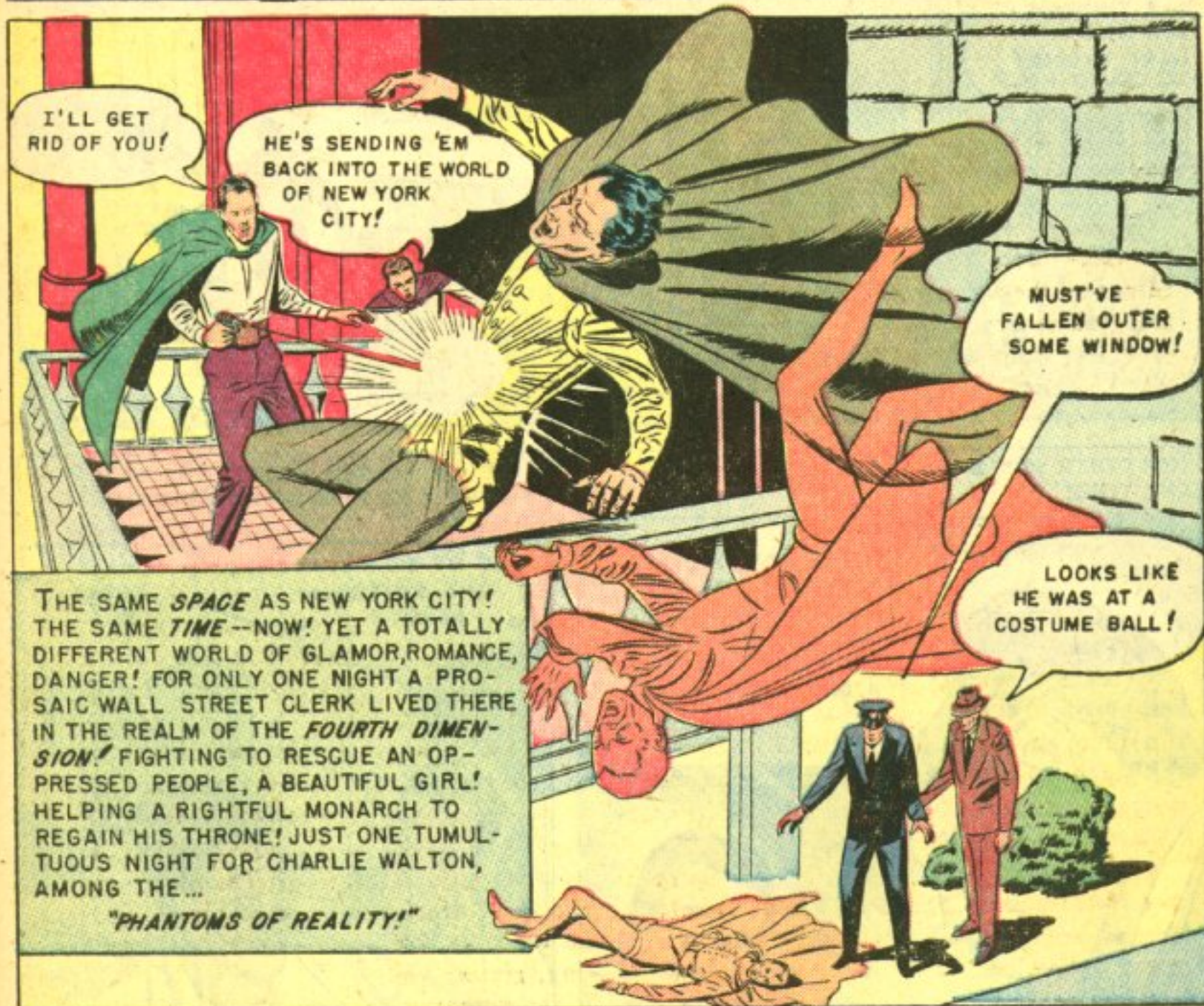
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PHANTOMS OF REALITY



"DEREK NEVER TOLD ME ANYTHING AT ALL ABOUT HIMSELF, AND THEN ONE EVENING..."

CHARLIE, I'M GOING ON A...WELL, A... TRIP! I WAS THINKING YOU MIGHT WANT TO COME! YOU COULD HELP ME!

A TRIP, DEREK?



"HE TOOK ME TO HIS APARTMENT... I SAT SPEECHLESS WHILE HE TOLD ME..."

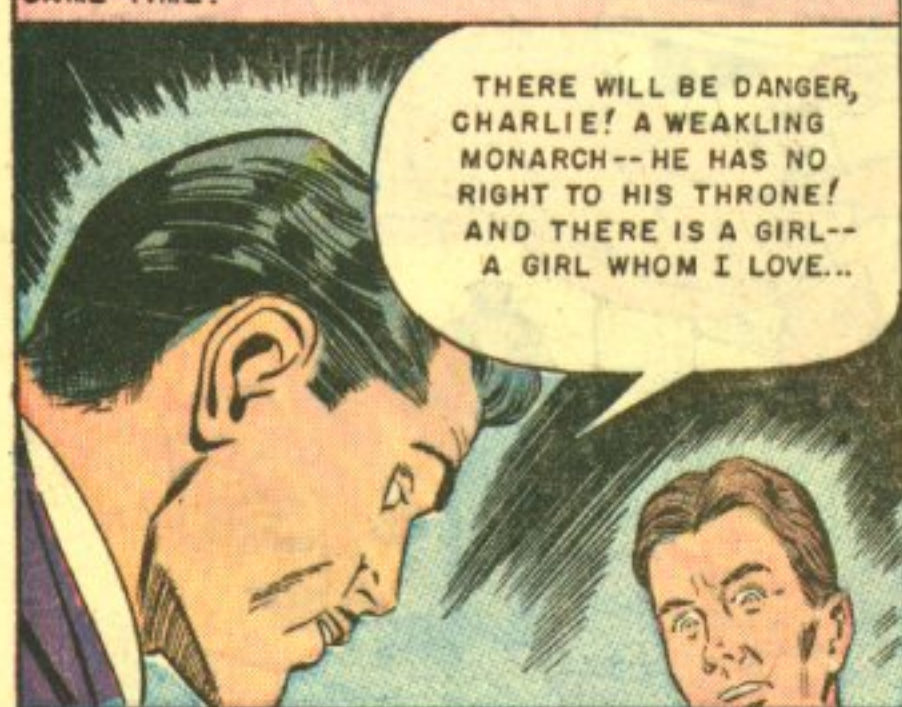
I'VE BEEN INTO A REALM OF THE FOURTH DIMENSION, CHARLIE! A WORLD THAT'S RIGHT HERE, IN THE SAME SPACE AS NEW YORK CITY! I-- I'VE GOT TO GO THERE AGAIN! TONIGHT!

-----?



"THIS OTHER WORLD CO-EXISTS WITH US, IN THE SAME TIME!"

THERE WILL BE DANGER, CHARLIE! A WEAKLING MONARCH-- HE HAS NO RIGHT TO HIS THRONE! AND THERE IS A GIRL-- A GIRL WHOM I LOVE...



"THE TRANSITION MECHANISMS WERE A NETWORK OF TINY WIRES UNDER OUR CLOTHES..."

AT MY SIGNAL, PRESS THE SWITCH--- READY?

I--- I GUESS SO!



IT'S--IT'S WEIRD! THE ROOM--FADING!

YOUR HEAD WILL STEADY IN A MINUTE!

W-WHERE ARE WE?

THE HALF-WORLD BETWEEN THE TWO REALMS! STEADY, CHARLIE!



"THEN, ANOTHER SCENE WAS MATERIALIZING! TREES, A LITTLE WINDING ROAD, A FEW QUAIN'T HOUSES!"

WE'RE ALMOST IN THE FOURTH DIMENSION WORLD, CHARLIE!

THE SAME SPACE! THAT'S THE HUDSON RIVER, OFF TO THE RIGHT!

"WE GENTLY SETTLED DOWN, AND..."

DEREK, YOU CAME!

HOPE, DEAR!

IT'S WORSE THAN WE FEARED! THE KING, LEONTO... PICKS HIS BRIDE TONIGHT! SHE WILL BE LITTLE BLANCA... OR...OR THAT HORRIBLE WOMAN, RED SENSUA!

AND I KNOW WHO HE'LL PICK, ALL RIGHT!

"HOPE HAD A LITTLE CART! SWIFTLY WE DROVE SOUTH...DOWN TOWARD THE SPACE WHICH I KNEW IN MY OWN WORLD WAS THE BATTERY!"

HERE, CHARLIE! PUT ON THIS CLOAK. OUR STRANGE CLOTHES SPELL DANGER!

ALL RIGHT, DEREK!

THE FLOWER FESTIVAL HAS ALREADY STARTED!

IF HE PICKS THE RED SENSUA, THE PEOPLE WON'T STAND FOR SUCH A QUEEN! THERE MUST BE NO BLOODSHED!

ARE YOU GOING TO TRY AND STOP HIM?

I AM NOT KNOWN HERE! BUT HOPE LIVES IN THE PALACE... SHE WILL BE HAND MAIDEN TO THE NEW QUEEN!

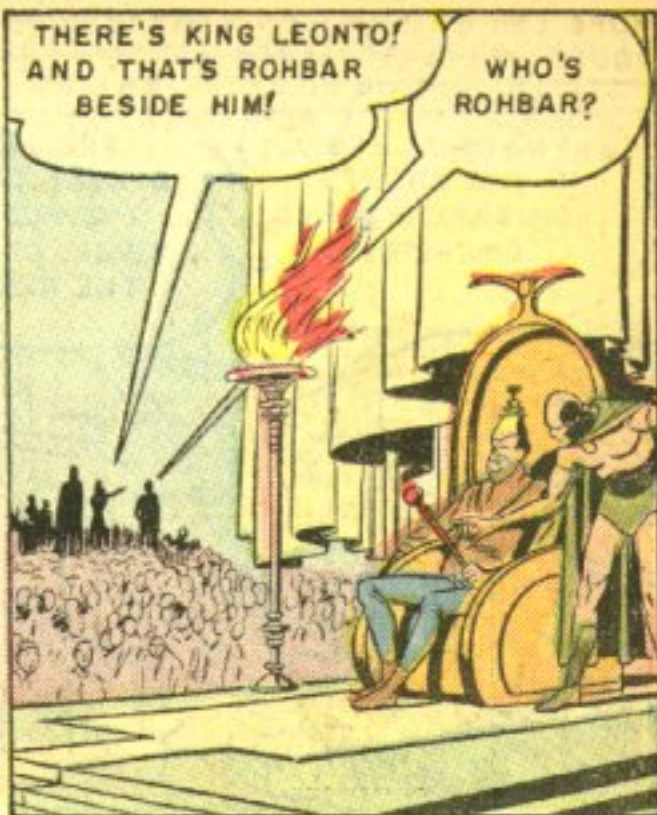
I COULD NOT STOP HIM!

"THEN
AT LAST
WE
REACHED
THE
FESTIVAL
GROUNDS!
BLANCA
WAS
DANCING..."



THERE'S KING LEONTO!
AND THAT'S ROHBAR
BESIDE HIM!

WHO'S
ROHBAR?



"ROHBAR! A SCOUNDREL ADVENTURER! ADVISER TO THE WEAKLING KING! VILLAINOUS FELLOW, WITH HIS OWN SINISTER SCHEMES..."

THAT ROHBAR--
I-- I'M AFRAID
OF HIM!

HE'S PROBABLY
TELLING THE
KING HE SHOULD
HAVE SENSUA
FOR HIS QUEEN!
NOT BLANCA!



"AND NOW SENSUA WAS DANCING! HER FACE WAS EVIL! ONE MIGHT HAVE ENCOUNTERED SUCH A WOMAN IN SOME ANCIENT CITY, DANCING FOR AN EASTERN PRINCE..."



"AS HER DANCE ENDED, SHE TURNED TO WHERE BLANCA WAS STANDING NEARBY ON THE LITTLE DIAS..."

THIS IS HOW I
DEAL WITH
RIVALS!

AAAAH!!!



"AS THE WHITE FIGURE OF BLANCA CRUMPLED, CHAOS SPRANG UP AROUND US..."

SHE KILLED
BLANCA!

THE KING PUT
HER UP TO IT!
THE KING!...

THE
KING IS
A VILLAIN!

THE
KING MUST
DIE!



THIS WILL MEAN
REVOLUTION!
COME ON, WE'VE
GOT TO GET
INTO THE
PALACE!

DEREK! HAVEN'T WE
GOT ANY WEAPONS?

I HAVE YOUR
BEAM-GUN,
DEREK! AND--
AND A DIRK!



"HOPE LED US THROUGH A SECRET UNDERGROUND PASSAGE..."

DEREK!
WHAT KIND
OF GUN
IS THAT?

THERE WAS AN
OLD SCIENTIST HERE...
YEARS AGO... HE'S
DEAD NOW! I GOT
IT FROM HIM! AND
THE TRANSITION
MECHANISMS...



"HE HAD NO TIME TO EXPLAIN ANY MORE OF IT!"

THE KING
WILL BE IN
HIS APART-
MENT...

WHAT...
WHAT ARE
YOU GOING
TO DO, DEREK?

YOU'LL
SEE!



"WE REACHED THE FRIGHTENED KING!
ROHBAR AND THE MURDEROUS SENSUA
WERE WITH HIM!"

DOWN
WITH KING
LEONTO...!

HOPE! WHO
ARE THOSE
MEN WITH
YOU?

I'LL
ANSWER
HIM!



I'M GOING
OUT ON THAT
BALCONY
AND TALK
TO THAT
MOB!

WHO THE
DEVIL ARE
YOU?

L...LET
HIM TRY
IT!

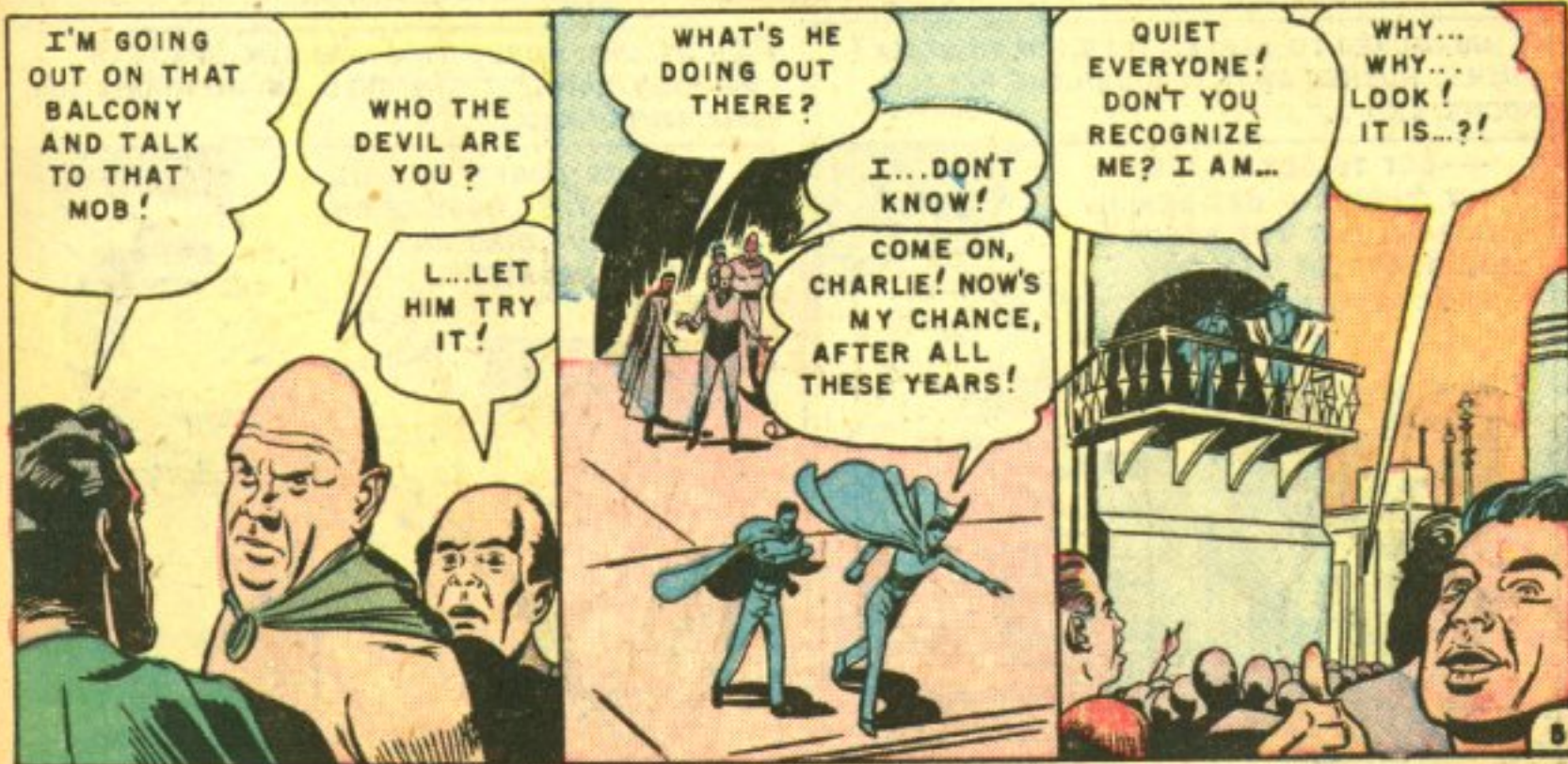
WHAT'S HE
DOING OUT
THERE?

I...DON'T
KNOW!

COME ON,
CHARLIE! NOW'S
MY CHANCE,
AFTER ALL
THESE YEARS!

QUIET
EVERYONE!
DON'T YOU
RECOGNIZE
ME? I AM...

WHY...
WHY...
LOOK!
IT IS...?!



"THEN THEY RECOGNIZED HIM!"



"THE FORMER KING HAD BEEN MURDERED! AND HIS LITTLE SON ALEXANDRE WOULD HAVE BEEN KILLED TOO, BUT HE ESCAPED INTO THE OUTER WORLD! NOW HE WAS BACK..."



"NOW THE KING'S CRIMSON CLOAKED NOBLES CAME RUSHING OUT AT DEREK! HIS BEAM-GUN SPAT AT THEM..."



"THAT BEAM SENT THOSE NOBLES INTO THE OTHER DIMENSION. THEN... A SCREAM HAD SOUNDED IN THE ROOM BEHIND US! HOPE HAD GONE IN THERE..."



"I RUSHED BACK OUT TO THE BALCONY..."

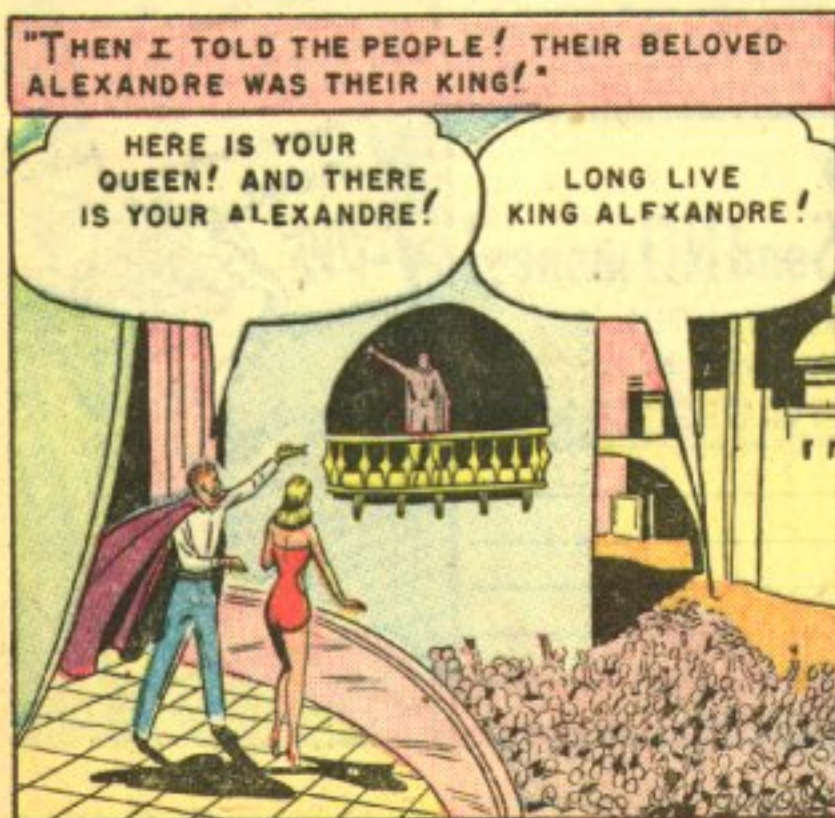
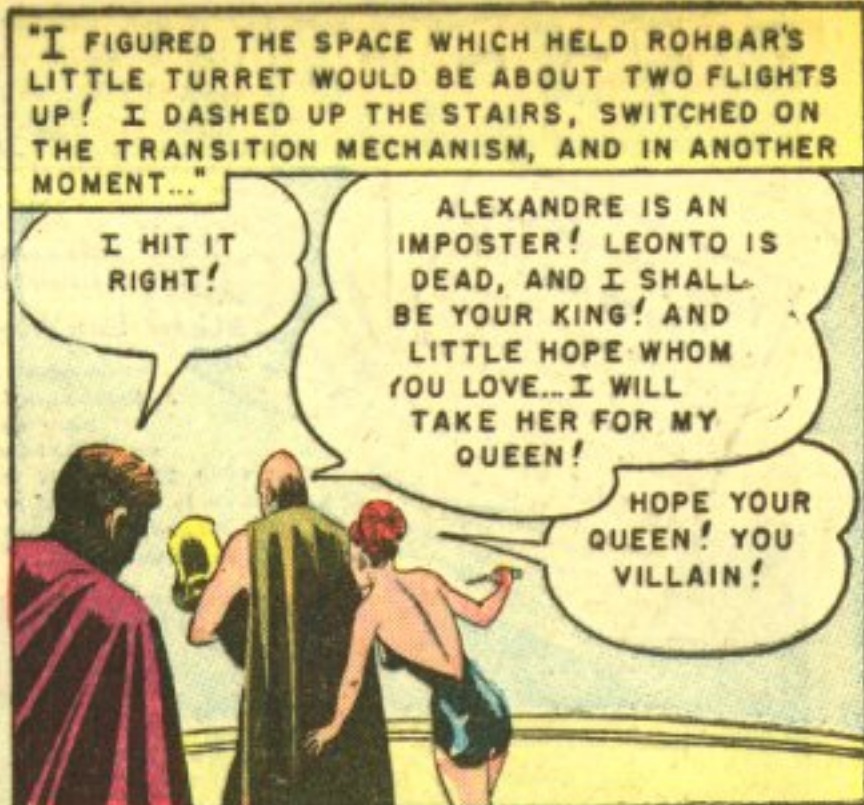


"I MURMURED TO DEREK... TOLD HIM TO STALL! THEN I RUSHED AWAY, THROUGH THE PALACE ROOMS, AND..."



"IN MY OWN WORLD THIS WAS THE SPACE OF BATTERY PARK! I SWITCHED ON MY TRANSITION MECHANISM, AND..."





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